

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

House Meets At...	Votes Predicted At...
10:30 a.m. For Morning Hour 12:00 p.m. For Legislative Business  Unlimited "One-minutes" Per Side	Last Vote: 6:00-7:00 p.m.

**Any anticipated Member absences for votes this week should be reported to the Office of the Majority Whip at 226-3210.**

### **Floor Schedule and Procedure**

- **Suspension Bills:** Today, the House will consider several bills on the Suspension calendar. Bills considered on the Suspension calendar are debatable for 40 minutes; may not be amended; and require a two-thirds vote for passage. If a recorded vote is requested, it will be postponed
  1. **H.R. \_\_\_\_** - Recovery Rebates and Economic Stimulus for the American People Act of 2008 (Reps. Pelosi / Boehner - Ways and Means / Financial Services)
  2. **H.R. 5104** - To extend the Protect America Act of 2007 for 30 days (Reps. Conyers / Reyes – Judiciary / Intelligence)
- **H. Res. 940-Rule providing for consideration of H.R. 1528 - New England National Scenic Trail Designation Act (Rep. Cardoza-Rules):**  
The structured rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Natural Resources. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Debate on the rule will be managed by Rep. Cardoza, and consideration will proceed as follows:
  - One hour of debate on the rule.
  - Possible vote on a Democratic Motion ordering the previous question. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**
  - Vote on adoption of the rule. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**

- **H.R. 1528 - New England National Scenic Trail Designation Act (Rep. Oliver – Natural Resources):** Pursuant to the rule, debate on the bill will be managed by Natural Resources Committee Chair Rep. Nick Rahall, or his designee, and will proceed as follows:
  - One hour of debate on the bill.
  - Debate and votes on amendments to the bill.
  - Possible debate and vote on a Republican Motion to recommit the bill.
  - Vote on passage of the bill.
  
- **Postponed Suspension Vote:**
  1. **H.Res. 933** - Commending the Louisiana State University Tigers football team for winning the 2007 Bowl Championship Series national championship game (*Rep. Baker – Education and Labor*)

### **Bill Summary and Key Issues**

#### **H.R. 1528: NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL DESIGNATION ACT**

**Trail System.** The Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett (MMM) Trail System is a 190-mile trail route, in existence for over half a century, which extends from the Massachusetts border with New Hampshire through western Massachusetts and Connecticut toward Long Island Sound.

**Trail Study Act of 2002.** The Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesset Trail Study Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-338) directed the Secretary of the Interior to study this trail system for potential addition to the National Trails System.

**National Park Service Feasibility Study.** The resulting National Park Service feasibility study found that the MMM Trail System hosts an array of scenic features, classic New England landscapes, and historic sites. The preferred alternative identified in the study calls for the establishment of the New England National Scenic Trail to incorporate most of the MMM Trail system, adjusted by some reroutes and proposed extensions, for a total proposed length of approximately 220 miles. H.R. 1528 would implement the preferred alternative.

**Administration and Management.** The route of the trail crosses land owned by state and local governments and by private landowners; no federal land is involved. The NPS study identified no need for direct federal trail ownership or direct federal trail management. The role of the National Park Service in implementing the proposed designation would be one of technical and financial assistance to existing trail partners – including state, tribal, regional and local agencies, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Connecticut Forest and Park Association – coordinated through a non-regulatory Trail Stewardship Council.

**Broad Bipartisan Support.** The bill is supported by the Administration, has bipartisan support, including the representatives of all affected districts in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and the affected local communities. The trail network is a highly popular route, predominantly managed and maintained by volunteers.

## **Anticipated Amendments to H.R. 1528**

**Bishop, Rob (UT)**, the amendment delays designation of the trail until all environmental analyses and the review required by Public Law 107-338 have been completed by the Secretary of the Interior. **(10 minutes)**

**Bishop, Rob (UT)**, the amendment states that state and local laws regarding hunting, fishing, trapping and netting shall be the exclusive laws regarding these activities on the trail. **(10 minutes)**

## **A BIPARTISAN ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE THAT WILL JUMPSTART AMERICA'S SLOWING ECONOMY**

On January 24, House Democrats and Republicans reached an agreement on a bipartisan stimulus package to immediately jumpstart the slowing economy. Our goals were to provide working Americans who are struggling in these difficult economic times with timely, targeted and temporary relief and to quickly give our economy a shot in the arm. We have accomplished both goals.

The House will move quickly to approve this stimulus initiative that will provide broad-based help to the American people and effectively invigorate the economy. We hope the Senate will do the same.

Economists agree that any stimulus package must put money in the hands of those who will spend it quickly to stimulate the economy, and this bipartisan package does just that.

This stimulus package with broad-based benefits will:

- Provide tax relief this spring of up to \$600 for an individual and up to \$1,200 for a married couple, plus \$300 per child. A total of 117 million families will receive a check.
- Include \$28 billion in checks to 35 million working families who would not otherwise been helped. More than 19 million of these are families with children.
- Double the amount small businesses can write off their taxes for new investments to get our economy moving again and provide immediate tax relief for all businesses to invest in new plants and equipment.

## The Bipartisan Economic Stimulus Package In-Depth

### Broad-Based Relief for Individuals (\$100 billion)

- **Tax Cut for 117 million Families.** This broad-based stimulus package will provide tax relief of up to \$600 per individual \$1,200 per a married couple, plus \$300 per child. Rebate checks could be sent as early as May.
- **Unprecedented Stimulus Gives Virtually All People Who Work Tax Relief.** As part of the individual tax relief, the measure provides \$28 billion in tax relief for 35 million families who work but make too little to pay income taxes -- families that the President's original proposal did not include. More than 19 million of these are families with children. Everyone who earned at least \$3,000 in 2007 will get at least \$300 per single and \$600 per couple, plus the full child tax credit amount of \$300. Economist Mark Zandi estimates that a tax rebate that include includes low- and moderate-income working families is 24 percent more effective as stimulus than a rebate that leaves these families out.
- **Tax Fairness.** Nearly \$40 billion of the rebate will go to families making less than \$50,000. The wealthiest taxpayers are not eligible for this relief. Tax relief begins to phase out above incomes of \$75,000 for a single and \$150,000 for a married couple.

### Jumpstarting the Economy

- **Broad-Based Relief Helps Financially-Pressed Americans, While Putting Money into the Economy.** Economists estimate that each dollar of broad tax cuts leads to \$1.26 in economic growth. This package is designed to ward off recession. If the economy worsens, Congress will develop a plan of further assistance, which could include Unemployment Insurance, Food Stamps, state and local assistance and Medicaid.

### Helping Families Avoid Foreclosure

- **One-year Increase in FHA's Ability to Guarantee More Loans.** Currently borrowers in many parts of the country are cut off from FHA financing. This revision would boost FHA loan limits to 125% of an area's median home price (but not to exceed \$729,750) for 2008. This will provide needed mortgage financing to borrowers in markets where such funds are currently unavailable or limited. According to a 2007 GAO report, during the recent housing boom (where the number of nationwide loans rose), the total number of FHA loans fell from 763,584 in 2001 to 286,470 in 2005. "FHA's market share in terms of numbers of loans fell from 19 percent in 1996 to 6 percent in 2005, with almost all of the decline occurring since 2001." This will help FHA return to its traditional role in housing finance.

- **Temporary Increase in GSE Conforming Loan Limits.** Similarly, the stimulus package will provide for a temporary increase for the GSEs conforming loan limits to match the new levels established for the FHA. Currently Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are only able to purchase loans under \$417,000. Loans with balances above that limit have fewer buyers and are significantly more expensive and difficult to finance. Even when financial institutions are willing to make these loans, because there is no secondary market for them, they cannot sell the loans and fund new ones. By permitting the GSEs to buy these loans, this change would provide vital liquidity to mortgage markets where funds are currently unavailable or limited.

### **Encouraging Business Investment (Roughly \$5 billion over 10 years)**

- **Small Business Expensing.** The bipartisan plan doubles the amount small businesses can write off their taxes for new investments made in 2008 from \$125,000 to \$250,000, and increase the number of small business that are eligible for this tax relief for small business making up to \$800,000 (from \$500,000).
- **Bonus Depreciation.** It provides immediate tax relief for all businesses to invest in new plant and equipment by speeding up bonus depreciation provisions, so that firms can write off 50 percent for investments in 2008.

### **H.R. 5104 – TO EXTEND THE PROTECT AMERICA ACT OF 2007 FOR 30 DAYS**

The temporary FISA reform enacted last August (the “PAA”) – will expire on Friday, February 1, 2008. Last November, the House passed the RESTORE Act to provide long-term FISA reform, but the Senate has yet to complete action. The clock on FISA reform is running out, and H.R. 5104 would extend the PAA by 30 days to give us the time needed to finalize the legislation.

The Senate has been working on its own version of FISA reform, but **there are significant deficiencies** in the current Senate bill when compared to the RESTORE Act

- The Senate bill in its current form offers immunity to telecommunications companies that participated in the President’s warrantless surveillance program. The RESTORE Act does not grant such immunity.
- The Senate bill in its current form allows surveillance with minimal judicial or congressional oversight. RESTORE requires court approval of surveillance programs and contains important safeguards that House Members felt were critical in ensuring Americans’ civil liberties.
- RESTORE sunsets in two years. The Senate bill sunsets in six years.
- RESTORE calls for the Inspector General of the Justice Department to investigate the President’s warrantless surveillance program. The Senate bill requires no such investigation.

**A short-term extension preserves the House's equities in the debate, rather than forcing agreement with an as-yet unfinished Senate version.** Although the Senate might pass FISA reform before the sunset date of the PAA, there will be insufficient time for conference. The Senate will not even vote on cloture until Monday evening, leaving the House at best only *one legislative day* in which to act. Therefore, we crafted H.R. 5104 to extend the PAA by 30 days – just long enough to provide time to hold a conference with the Senate and reconcile the differences between our bills. Without the 30-day extension, we will be forced to act immediately, passing the Senate bill as-is, or face expiration of the current surveillance program. **An extension is NOT a vote for the PAA**, but is a vote for time in which to fight for the independence of the House and the substance of the carefully-crafted House-passed bill.

**Documents are only now being provided to the House, and we need time to review documents to understand exactly what the telecom companies did.**

On Thursday, after eight months of requests, the White House finally agreed to give certain Members of the House Intelligence and Judiciary Committees access to documents related to the President's warrantless surveillance program. Judiciary Committee Members will not be "read in" to the program until the afternoon of Tuesday the 29th of January at the earliest. Thousands of pages of material were provided, and it will take time to carefully review these detailed documents and to make a reasoned judgment about what they contain and how they impact such important issues as telecommunications carrier liability.

**Join us in voting for time.** In order to ensure that the House has sufficient time to review these documents and to engage the Senate in a meaningful conference, we introduced this short-term extension of the Protect America Act. Civil Liberties groups have reviewed this course, and either support this effort or are choosing to remain neutral. The American people deserve nothing less than our careful consideration of changes to surveillance law that implicates our cherished civil liberties and privacy rights.

**Quote of the Day**

"We shall be judged more by what we do at home than what we preach abroad."  
-John F. Kennedy

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